

Water watch protocol finalised

NAIMUL HAQ

In a big step forward to fight the dreaded arsenic contamination of groundwater, the long awaited water quality surveillance protocol for rural water supply options in Bangladesh has been finalised.

Already approved by the local government ministry, the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) would start implementing the protocol shortly, officials said yesterday.

The protocol provides for monitoring and periodic tests of water quality in various drinking water options.

The DPHE would conduct tests to detect arsenic, iron, manganese, chloride, nitrate, zinc, hardness, colour, odour, pH (acidity), electric conductivity and turbidity.

The protocol also recommended tests for bacteria and pesticide in water.

In cases of water options like pond sand filter and rainwater harvesting (RWH), the protocol

suggests tests for arsenic and nitrate every six and three months respectively. For iron, manganese and chloride, it recommended tests every six months, for pesticide once a year and for bacteria, colour and odour investigations every 15 days.

For other water options like hand-pumped tube-wells, deep tube-wells, arsenic removal plants and dug wells, frequency of tests would vary from three to six months.

In many areas, concentration of arsenic, iron, manganese, chloride and nitrate in water exceeds the WHO-recommended limits, exposing people to serious health hazards. Till now, regular tests could be conducted largely due to inadequacy of laboratories and fund crisis.

Three laboratories for water tests are now being set up in Barisal, Rangpur and Sylhet. Besides, the existing four has been modernised with technical assistance from WHO.

Cyclone hovers over Bay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The tropical cyclone growing from a depression is moving in circles over the southwest Bay of Bengal, according to a weathercast yesterday.

The cyclone lay centred at about 1,435 kilometres south-southwest of the Chittagong port, 1,360km south-southwest of Cox's Bazar and 1,340km south-southwest of the Mongla port. It is likely to intensify further and move northwest.

"It's not moving in any direction. So we cannot say whether it will hit the coastal zone or move towards India," says Samarendra Karmaker, director of the Dhaka Met office.

The maximum sustained wind speed within 74km of the centre of the cyclone is about 90 kilometres an hour, rising to 110km in gusts or squalls.

The ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to be alert on signal No. 2, as the sea will remain rough.

Deep-sea fishing boats and trawlers have been asked to stay close to the coast and move with caution.

Meanwhile, Indian meteorological officials told AFP that the storm was 650km southeast of Madras and expected to move towards the

Whatmore in town

SPORTS REPORTER

New Bangladesh cricket coach Dav Whatmore arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a five-day fact-finding mission. The high-profile coach signed a two-year contract with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) last month and he will take over the national team from sacked Pakistani Mohsin Kamal on June 1.

The 49-year-old former Sri Lankan coach said that he was relishing the challenge to coach Bangladesh. His first assignment will be a difficult tour to Australia.

Whatmore, who led the Lankans to win the World Cup in 1996, said his goal was to change the defeatist attitude of Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Saddam, sons still alive and in Iraq: Chalabi

AFP, Dubai

Ousted president Saddam Hussein and his sons Uday and Qusay are still alive and in Iraq, Ahmed Chalabi, head of the US-backed opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress, said yesterday.

"Our people say he's still in Iraq and hasn't left," Chalabi told the London-based Arabic daily Asharq Al-Awsat, adding that he only moved with a "special escort".

"His sons are also in Iraq but they are not always together."

Some 20 of the 55 most wanted members of the ousted regime are now in coalition custody, but the fate of Saddam and his family

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Roadmap for Indo-Pak talks ready: Sinha

AP, New Delhi

Indian government has prepared a full road map for talks with Pakistan, External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha said yesterday.

"Every step is clear in our mind. There is no confusion in the Government of India and we will proceed according to that plan," Sinha said in an interview with NDTV. Sinha declined to give details. But his comments indicated that India remains serious about proceeding with talks aimed at resolving decades of animosity with Pakistan.

"As far as we are concerned in India, we have very, very clearly worked out the entire road map," Sinha said.

Pakistani Information Minister

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Vajpayee to visit China in June

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will travel next month to China, marking the first visit by an Indian premier to the country in a decade, Defence Minister George Fernandes said yesterday.

The visit will focus on strengthening diplomatic ties between the world's two most populous countries and ensuring peace on their 9,000-kilometre border, said Fernandes.

"The prime minister will be going next month. The talks will cover a lot of issues," he told reporters after inaugurating a conference of ordnance factory managers.

"In the last three years, not a

single incident has happened on the Indo-China border which required a bullet to be fired," he added.

Fernandes noted there was "peace, tranquility and even bonhomie" among troops (of the two countries) on the frontiers, and said regular talks about bilateral border disputes were making headway.

India argues that China holds 40,000 square kilometres of its territory in Kashmir, while China lays claim to a wide swathe of territory in Arunachal Pradesh, an Indian state east of Bhutan.

The two countries fought a brief but bloody border war in 1962 and briefly clashed again in 1986 in Arunachal Pradesh's Sumdorong

Chuvalley.

Fernandes caused a diplomatic storm in 1998 when he said China, not India's arch-enemy Pakistan, was the main reason for conducting nuclear tests.

India and China have stepped up efforts since the early 1990s to improve ties through a flurry of high-level exchanges, including a visit to New Delhi last year by then-Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji.

The last visit by an Indian prime minister to China was in 1993 by PV Narasimha Rao when India and China concluded the historic Peace and Tranquility Agreement over their border. India and China are two of the fastest growing

e c o n o m i e s in the world.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8



Human chain before Ctg Press Club for Khosru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A human chain was formed and a rally held yesterday in front of the Chittagong Press Club demanding immediate release of Atahar Siddique Khosru, Sitakunda Press Club president, and Mahmudul Haq and Noor Mostafa.

Sitakunda Press Club and Chittagong Journalists Forum jointly organised the human-chain and rally.

The rally announced a half-day

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

BSF rejects BDR plea to release the abducted

UNB, Thakurgaon

Two Bangladeshis kidnapped Thursday by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) from Haripur frontier were still being held by the Indians on Sunday.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said the BSF picked up Mokter Hossain, 22, son of Haji Dost Mohammad of Jibanpur village, and Raju, 13, son of Doud Ali of Haldibari village, from the frontier area on Thursday evening.

BDR of local Khilpur check-post protested the incident and demanded return of the two Bangladeshis. But BSF said the two Bangladeshis were handed over to the police of Royganj thana in India.

A tense situation was prevailing in the frontier Jibanpur and Haldibari villages.

A case was filed with Haripur thana.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 13		6-33 pm
May 14	5-16 am	

Prayer Timings		
May 13		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-30	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-38	6-42
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer carries sheaves of hybrid rice Sonar Bangla-1 in a paddy field in Gazipur yesterday. The production of the rice variety has reached 105 maunds an acre.

Hybrid rice magic doubles yield

ABDUL KADER, Back from Gazipur

For the first time in the country, production of hybrid rice Sonar Bangla-1 has reached 105 maunds per acre

The maximum yield of other high yielding varieties (HYVs) of rice is 60 to 75 maunds.

Farmers in some villages in Gazipur district have achieved this record harvest of Sonar

Bangla-1 this season.

A team of newsmen came to know of the success story during a visit

to Pakuria village in Sirpur upazila of the district recently.

Imported from China and adapted locally through research, the hybrid variety is being cultivated on a small scale in different areas.

A private firm, Mollika Seed Company, imported the

'CNSGC-6' hybrid variety from China in 1998, and started marketing it with a local name, Sonar Bangla-1.

Farmers in Pakuria village happily described to newsmen their experience of cultivating this hybrid variety.

"I cultivated Sonar Bangla-1 in two bigha of land this season. The average yield is 35 maunds

p e r a c r e

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Rajshahi in crime garb

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Considering the drastic fall in law and order in Rajshahi, people see the police's anti-outlaw drive as a failure.

The increase in criminal activities is mainly attributed to several groups of killers allegedly on the loose in the remote areas of Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon, Bogra and Pabna.

The assailants, reportedly belonging to Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), killed some 50 political leaders, businessmen and even their party members during the past two months.

Police could make no headway in any of the murder cases. Rather their 'inactivity' seemed to have encouraged the outlaws to go on a killing spree besides dacoity and extortion, people and sources

believe.

A senior police official preferring anonymity explained that the outlaws have 'strong deep-rooted network' together with very influential patrons.

Besides, lack of logistic support and information leakage during raids are holding back the police from making breakthroughs, the official added.

"It is not true that the drive was a complete failure. We kept the outlaws on the run," Anwar Hussain, DIG of Rajshahi range police, told The Daily Star.

The latest victim of the outlaws was a 14 years old Aminul Islam Bichchu, a junior outlaw leader slain at Baroihati village in Bhatkhal union of Bagmara upazila in Rajshahi.

A group of outlaws called

Bichchu out of his home at around 10:00pm on Friday and hacked him to death near a bridge. The assailants allegedly left the scene chanting slogans in favour of the PBCP.

"He was a terror in the areas," said Abdul Muttalib, officer in charge (OC) of the Bagmara Police Station.

The OC said Bichchu always took advantage of his age and was freed on bail several times.

Bichchu was an accused in at least ten cases of murder, dacoity and extortion, police sources said.

Bichchu's father Afazal Hossain lodged a case in this regard with the Bagmara Police Station accusing ten people including Shamsul Haidur, Amjad, Alauddin, Kamrul and Bhuttu. Police could not arrest anyone in this connection so far.

Graft case Charges pressed against Ershad, Anwar Hossain Manju

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) yesterday pressed charges against former president HM Ershad and his cabinet minister Anwar Hossain Manju in a graft case.

BAC official Mohammad Abul Hossain submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, yesterday afternoon.

In the case filed with Teigaon police station, it was alleged that Ershad and former energy and mineral resources minister Manju, while in office, gave a contract to the Scimitar Oils SA for drilling and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

British minister Clare Short quits over Iraq

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair yesterday lost his second senior minister as a result of his stance on Iraq, with International Development Secretary Clare Short resigning and accusing him of breaking promises to involve the United Nations in running the oil-rich country.

"Dear Tony, I have decided that I must leave the government," Short's resignation letter began.

"I am afraid that the assurances you gave me about the need for a UN mandate to establish a legitimate Iraqi government have been breached," Short wrote to Blair in a resignation letter.

"The (UN) Security Council resolution that you and Jack (Foreign Secretary Jack Straw) have so secretly negotiated contradicts the assurances I have given in the House of Commons and elsewhere about the legal authority of the occupying powers and the need for a UN-led process to establish a legitimate Iraqi government,"

Short wrote.

"This makes my position impossible," she said.

Within an hour of the resignation, Valerie Amos, one of Short's deputies in the Department for International Development and a Baroness in Britain's upper chamber, the House of Lords, was appointed to replace her.

Blair's former foreign minister Robin Cook resigned as leader of the House of Commons, the lower house of parliament, in March over the government's decision to join the US-led war on Iraq.

Blair's office later rejected Short's suggestion that he had given her assurances about the legality of war and the reconstruction effort in Iraq which had not been fulfilled.

"I don't think it is overstating it to say that the prime minister played a very important role in taking this issue to the UN in the first instance," Blair's official spokesman said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

A member of the Bangladesh Diploma Nurses Association carries a placard on AIDS consciousness in Dhaka on International Nurses Day yesterday.